THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • SEPTEMBER 24, 2020 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 18 • LATE CITY EDITION

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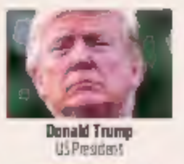
MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is among Time magazine's 100 most influential people 2020 list, released on Wednesday

Kamala Harris
US Vice-Presidential nominee

Xi Jinping
Chinese President


Donald Trump
US President

Angela Merkel
Chancellor of Germany

Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Reps

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

Joe Biden
US Presidential candidate

John Roberts
US Supreme Court Chief Justice

Yousef Al Otaiba
UAE's Ambassador to the US

TIME

TIME'S FIVE CATEGORIES: PIONEERS, ARTISTS, LEADERS, TITANS & ICONS

PIONEERS

Ravindra Gupta
Indian-origin biologist

Megan Thee Stallion: American rapper, singer and songwriter

Giannis Antetokounmpo: Greek professional basketball player for the Milwaukee Bucks of the National Basketball Association

Julie K Brown: American investigative journalist with the Miami Herald

TITANS

Sundar Pichai
CEO of Alphabet Inc

Dwyane Wade: American former professional basketball player

MacKenzie Scott: American novelist, billionaire, and venture philanthropist

Jerome Powell: Chairman of the Federal Reserve

ICONS

Bilkis
Shaheen Bagh protester

BLACK LIVES MATTER FOUNDERS

Alicia Garza

Patrisse Cullors

Opal Tometi

Lina Attalah
Co-founder and chief editor of Mada Masr, an independent online Egyptian newspaper

ARTISTES

Ayushmann Khurrana
Bollywood actor

Michael B. Jordan: American actor and producer

Selena Gomez: American singer, songwriter, actress, and producer

Ali Wong: Stand-up comedian, actress, and writer

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Chinese spy ring targeting Dalai Lama runs all the way to Karnataka

BALA CHAUHAN @Bengaluru

AMIDST the unabated tensions between India and China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, Indian agencies have unearthed an embedded espionage network of Chinese nationals, who are reportedly using hawala networks to send money to some Tibetan monks through their families in Tibet in return for sensitive information about the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

Chinese national Luo Sang alias Charlie Peng, who was arrested on September 13 by the Delhi Special Police on charges of espionage, had reportedly cultivated 'assets' right from Delhi to Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, which have the largest Tibetan settlements in the country. McLeodganj near Dharamshala in HP is the headquarters of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), where the Dalai Lama also resides.

Luo was running an over ₹1,000 crore hawala operation through shell companies and 40 bank accounts at the behest of the Chinese external intelligence agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS).

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), which has booked Luo under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), has reportedly tracked the money trail from his shell companies to Delhi, HP and Karnataka, highly placed sources told this newspaper. "One of the reasons why the MSS used the hawala route to help Luo allegedly infiltrate Tibetan settlements in the country is because there are no banking channels or financial services between India and Tibet," said the source.

Luo Sang, who has been booked by the ED under the PMLA laws

"Some families in Tibet have traditionally been sending money to their kin in India, who are studying Tibetan Buddhism to become monks, so as to help them with the rituals which are required to be conducted to complete their graduation. In the absence of any legitimate banking channel, hawala is the only route through which money is sent from Tibet to India," said the source. Hawala is illegal in India because it operates outside the conventional banking system.

A multi-agency team of officials from the ED, Intelligence Bureau, Income Tax Department and the Karnataka police have visited the monasteries in Bylakuppe and Mundgod in Karnataka and have questioned some monks and local residents in this regard.

CONTINUED ON: P7

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad and other Opposition leaders before addressing the media, after a meeting with President Ramnath Kovind over the recent farm sector reform bills, in New Delhi on Wednesday | P11

Dassault yet to fulfil Rafale offset obligations, says CAG

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

THE Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on Wednesday questioned India's offset policy and came down heavily on foreign vendors for not fulfilling their offset commitments.

In its report titled 'CAG's Performance Audit Report on Management of Defence Offset', the national auditor pointed out that French aerospace major Dassault Aviation and European missile maker MBDA, which supplied armaments for the Rafale jets, have not yet discharged their 30% offset obligation.

India received the delivery of the first batch of five Rafale fighter jets from the French manufacturer on July 29. They were formally inducted in the Indian Air Force on September 10.

The total value of the Rafale deal is ₹59,000 crore. Opposition parties had alleged irregularities in the fighter jet deal.

"In many cases, it was found that the foreign vendors made various offset commitments to qualify for the main supply contract but later, were not earnest about fulfilling these commitments," the financial watchdog said in its report.

Policy review call

In view of the fact that the offset policy has not yielded the desired results, the CAG suggested the government review the policy

Giving example of Dassault Aviation, the CAG said, "In the offset 4 contract relating to 36 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft, the vendors Dassault Aviation and MBDA initially proposed (September 2015) to discharge 30% of their offset obligation by offering high technology to DRDO." But they have not confirmed the technology transfer till date, it observed.

DRDO wanted to obtain technical assistance for the indigenous development of engine (Kaveri) for the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas.

Till date, the vendor has not confirmed the transfer of this technology, it said. As per the deal, the company has to invest 50% of the worth of the deal back in India as offset obligations. The investment amounted to around ₹30,000 crore for which a number of Indian firms, including Anil Ambani's Reliance Defence, were chosen. This became a major controversy since the company was totally new in this sector.

India adopted the offset policy for defence capital purchases in 2005, according to which all capital purchases above ₹300 crore through imports will have the foreign vendor invest at least 30% of the value of the purchase in India.

IPL MATCH TODAY

Royal Challengers Bangalore will face Kings XI Punjab in their second match in Dubai on Thursday. Bangalore have won their opening match while Punjab lost their first in a Super Over. Opener Devdutt Padikkal will be on focus again for Virat Kohli's men, while leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi will the one to watch out for for Punjab.

ODDS: KXIP 6/5 RCB 8/11

LIVE: STAR SPORTS1/ HOTSTAR @ 7.30PM

WEDNESDAY'S RESULT

Mumbai Indians beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 49 runs after posting 195/5. Skipper Rohit Sharma top-scored with 80.

KKR
PICKS UP STAKE IN RELIANCE RETAIL

The US private equity firm will invest ₹5,550 crore to buy 1.28% stake, which will take the Indian retail company to a pre-money equity value of ₹4.21 lakh crore | P12

RS clears 15 bills in 2 days amidst Oppn's boycott

Parliament's nod to labour code revamp bills; 50 laws approved in both Houses; session ends

RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

OVER 100 per cent productivity in a truncated monsoon session. That is a landmark the Rajya Sabha could have been proud of had the situation been normal. But the target was achieved amid the absence of the Opposition, which has been boycotting the session since Tuesday over the suspension of eight members from the House for unruly behaviour.

As many as 15 weighty bills were passed between Tuesday and Wednesday in the space of nearly seven-and-a-half hours in the Upper House. In other words, one bill every 30 minutes. Legislative agenda wrapped up, both Houses were then adjourned *sine die*.

As for the Opposition, it held a silent march on Parliament's premises over three farm sector reform bills and later met President Ram Nath Kovind to request him return the "unconstitutional" pieces of legislation.

Eighteen political parties had earlier written to Kovind expressing concern over the manner in which the farm bills were passed in the House of Elders. However, in view of the Covid-19 situation, only Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad got to meet the President.

In just 10 sittings, the Rajya Sabha passed as many as 25 bills. An equal number of bill were passed in the Lok Sabha. "The productivity of the House during this session has been 100.47 per cent," Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said in his valedictory address.

Prominent among the eight bills cleared in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday were three on labour code reforms, despite floor leaders of 12 Opposition parties jointly urging Naidu not to let them pass without proper discussion.

"These bills affect the livelihood of crores of workers across the country. It will be a great blot on our democracy to have these bills pass unilaterally today," the Opposition wrote. Referring to it, Naidu cited precedents when business was taken up as per schedule and bills approved during boycott or walkout by some members.

Replying to the debate on the three labour reforms bills, minister Santosh Gangwar said they will provide a transparent system to suit the changed business environment.

The Lok Sabha "registered 167 per cent productivity," said Speaker Om Birla. P9

BMS hits out at Modi govt over labour bills

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), an RSS affiliate, on Wednesday hit out at the Centre for ignoring its objections to the labour reform bills. It accused the BJP-led government of pandering to the whims of corporates while turning a blind eye to the needs of employees.

"The BMS and other trade unions had given detailed objections to the previous draft of the Industrial Relations Code. None of the objections raised by the BMS and other trade unions as well as the recommendations of PSCL (Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour) in favour of workers was considered in the revised draft," said BMS secretary-general Vrijesh Upadhyay.

He alleged the Industrial Relations Code is tilted too much in favour of employers and bureaucrats. "The last-minute mutilations will adversely affect industrial peace in the country. Some important changes, like that on standing orders, were not even discussed in the consultation process, which is a violation of the ILO Convention 144 ratified by Indian Parliament," he added.

The BMS said the new law is a clear attempt to diminish the role of trade unions.

The Sangh said the decision to allow companies with up to 300 employees to fire workers and close down units without government permission will promote "ease of closing business, not ease of doing business".

State's Covid fatality rate dipping, CM tells Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa, who interacted with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday regarding the Covid-19 situation, pointed out that the fatality rate in Karnataka was coming down and presently stands at 1.54 per cent, while it was 2.6 per cent in July.

The PM held a video conference with the CMs of the seven high Covid-prevalence states — Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab — to take stock of the situation.

Yediyurappa informed the PM that the state has set up 136 testing laboratories and testing has been increased to about 70,000 samples per day. So far, about 43 lakh samples have been tested. All symptomatic patients are shifted to hospitals immediately after the test results are out and a target has been set to identify all contacts of Covid-19 positive cases in 24 to 48 hours and quarantine them, he said.

The CM said the number of oxygen beds in government hospitals has been increased from 7,000 to 18,000, and will be further enhanced to 31,000. Over 3,000 ICU beds in government and private hospitals have been reserved for Covid patients. Besides standard treatment, "We are also ensuring that patients are given 'novel drugs', including Remdesivir, for free."

The government has also made available 2,000 ambulances, he said.

CONTINUED ON: P7,9

EXPRESS READ

Indian economy to contract 5.4%: UN

United Nations: Impacted by disruptions caused by Covid, India's economy is forecast to contract by 5.9 per cent in 2020, the UN has said in a report, warning that while growth will rebound next year, the contraction may translate into income loss.

Union Minister Angadi succumbs to Covid-19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi/Bengaluru/Belagavi

UNION Minister of State for Railways, Suresh Angadi, succumbed to the novel coronavirus on Wednesday evening at AIIMS, Delhi. According to AIIMS sources, the 65-year-old minister breathed his last around 8pm.

Angadi, a Lok Sabha MP from Belagavi constituency, was diagnosed with Covid-19 two weeks ago. He was asymptomatic then, but was admitted to AIIMS after his condition deteriorated. Angadi is the second member of parliament from Karnataka who died due to Covid-19. Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Gasti (55) died in Bengaluru on September 17.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted about the death of the minister and offered his condolences. "Shri Suresh Angadi was an exceptional Karyakarta, who worked hard to make the party strong in Karnataka. He was a dedicated MP and effective minister, admired across the spectrum. His demise is saddening. My thoughts are with his family and friends in this sad hour. Om Shanti," he tweeted.

Hailing from a poor farmer's family in KK Kop near Belagavi, Suresh Angadi not only established his business empire in the last three decades, but won four Lok Sabha elections in a row.

He was inducted into the Union Cabinet as Minister of State for Railways after the 2019 win from Belagavi.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Worst over for IT biz as cos eye more deals, buys

BISMAH MALIK @Bengaluru

DESPITE a substantial decline in profits the leading IT service providers witnessed in the quarter gone by (April- June FY 21), the sector is headed for a strong comeback even as the overseas markets still remain challenged by the Covid pandemic. Industry experts expect tier 1 and mid-tier IT service companies to post a marginal growth in the range of 3-5% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ), although the revenues as well as profits will nowhere be close to what was seen last year. The wave of layoffs triggered by the pandemic in the industry is also likely to stabilise in the next few months, as financials improve.

Companies like Infosys, HCL Tech have already provided their revenue guidance for the quarter ended September FY21 and are hopeful of increased revenue growth as well as net profits on the back of strong deal pipeline and demand for digital services.

The acceleration of digital transformation of enterprises catalysed by the Covid pandemic along with cost-cutting measures have brought back the demand for IT services, especially in the cloud, automation, artificial intelligence and remote working domains. IT bellwethers, TCS, Infosys and Wipro, have been bagging large deals from overseas markets like the UK, US, Middle East and South Africa to help businesses undergo digital transformation, as warranted in the pandemic situation. Even mid-tier companies like L&T Infotech, Mindtree, Happiest Minds etc have reported a strong deal pipeline, even as the client base has not seen a substantial increase.

COVIDONOMICS PART-4

Bengaluru-headquartered Infosys had earlier announced a multi-year contract with a Brazilian firm, Vanguard reported at around $1.5 billion. The company announced that its deal size for the first quarter of FY21 stood at $1.74 billion. "Although the pandemic has led to a disruption in the IT industry and the deal size has been affected, the company still has a robust deal pipeline," Infosys CEO Salil Parekh said. P7

MOVING ON

Consortium, NLSIU look to mend ties

PEARL MARIA D'SOUZA @Bengaluru

THOUGH the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) had pulled out of the Consortium of National Law Universities, followed by reports of its Vice-Chancellor Sudhir Krishnaswamy being divested of his functions as secretary-treasurer of the consortium, it now appears that no harm was done to the relationship between the two.

In fact, a reconciliation between the top law institute and the consortium, who had public fall out recently, is in the offing.

Faizan Mustafa, former president, Consortium of National Law Universities, and the senior-most member of the Consortium of National Law Universities, said he was "hopeful that bygones will be treated as bygones."

CONTINUED ON: P7